No. 32. PRICE SIXPENCE. July 6,

The Last Chronicle of Barset

BY

ANTHONY TROLLOPE.

With Illustrations by G. H. Thomas

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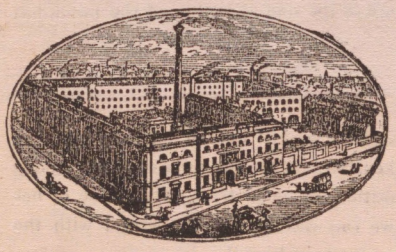

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CHAPTER LXXXII.

THE LAST SCENE AT HOGGLESTOCK.

THE fortnight following Mr. Harding's death was passed very quietly at Hogglestock, for during that time no visitor made an appearance in the parish except Mr. Snapper on the Sundays. Mr. Snapper, when he had completed the service on the first of these Sundays, intimated to Mr. Crawley his opinion that probably that gentleman might himself wish to resume the duties on the following Sabbath. Mr. Crawley, however, courteously declined to do anything of the kind. He said that it was quite out of the question that he should do so without a direct communication made to him from the bishop, or by the bishop's order. The assizes had, of course, gone by, and all question of the trial was over. Nevertheless,—as Mr. Snapper said,—the bishop had not, as yet, given any order. Mr. Snapper was of opinion that the bishop in these days was not quite himself. He had spoken to the bishop about it and the bishop had told him peevishly—"I must say quite peevishly," Mr. Snapper had said,—that nothing was to be done at present. Mr. Snapper was not the less clearly of opinion that Mr. Crawley might resume his duties. To this, however, Mr. Crawley would not assent.

But even during the fortnight Mr. Crawley had not remained altogether neglected. Two days after Mr. Harding's death he had received a note from the dean in which he was advised not to resume the duties at Hogglestock for the present. "Of course you can understand that we have a sad house here at present," the dean had said. "But as soon as ever we are able to move in the matter we will arrange things for you as comfortably as we can. I will see the bishop myself."

Mr. Crawley had no ambitious idea of any comfort which might accrue to him beyond that of an honourable return to his humble preferment at Hogglestock; but, nevertheless, he was in this case minded to do as the dean counselled him. He had submitted himself to the bishop, and he would wait till the bishop absolved him from his submission.

On the day after the funeral, the bishop had sent his compliments to the dean with the expression of a wish that the dean would call upon him on any early day that might be convenient with reference to the position of Mr. Crawley of Hogglestock. The note was in the bishop's own handwriting and was as mild and civil as a bishop's note could be. Of course the dean named an early day for the interview; but it was necessary before he went to the bishop that he should discuss the matter with the archdeacon. If St. Ewolds might be given to Mr. Crawley, the Hogglestock difficulties would all be brought to an end. The archdeacon, after the funeral, had returned to Plumstead, and thither the dean went to him before he saw the bishop. He did succeed,—he and Mrs. Grantly between them,—but with very great difficulty, in obtaining a conditional promise. They had both thought that when the archdeacon became fully aware that Grace was to be his daughter-in-law, he would at once have been delighted to have an opportunity of extricating from his poverty a clergyman with whom it was his fate to be so closely connected. But he fought the matter on twenty different points. He declared at first that as it was his primary duty to give to the people of St. Ewolds the best clergyman he could select for them he could not give the preferment to Mr. Crawley, because Mr. Crawley, in spite of all his zeal and piety, was a man so quaint in his manners and so eccentric in his mode of speech as not to be the best clergyman whom he could select. "What is my old friend Thorne to do with a man in his parish who won't drink a glass of wine with him?" For Ullathorne, the seat of that Mr. Wilfred Thorne who had been so guilty in the matter of the foxes, was situated in the parish of St. Ewolds. When Mrs. Grantly proposed that Mr. Thorne's consent should be asked, the archdeacon became very angry. He had never heard so unecclesiastical a proposition in his life. It was his special duty to do the best he could for Mr. Thorne, but it was specially his duty to do so without consulting Mr. Thorne about it. As the archdeacon's objection had been argued simply on the point of the glass of wine, both the dean and Mrs. Grantly thought that he was unreasonable. But they had their point to gain, and therefore they only flattered him. They were sure that Mr. Thorne would like to have a clergyman in the parish who would himself be closely connected with the archdeacon. Then Dr. Grantly

alleged that he might find himself in a trap. What if he conferred the living of St. Ewolds on Mr. Crawley and after all there should be no marriage between his son and Grace? "Of course they'll be married," said Mrs. Grantly. "It's all very well for you to say that, my dear; but the whole family are so queer that there is no knowing what the girl may do. She may take up some other fad now, and refuse him point blank." "She has never taken up any fad," said Mrs. Grantly, who now mounted almost to wrath in defence of her future daughter-in-law, "and you are wrong to say that she has. She has behaved beautifully; —as nobody knows better than you do." Then the archdeacon gave way so far as to promise that St. Ewolds should be offered to Mr. Crawley as soon as Grace Crawley was in truth engaged to Harry Grantly.

After that, the dean went to the palace. There had never been any quarrelling between the bishop and the dean, either direct or indirect;— nor, indeed, had the dean ever quarrelled even with Mrs. Proudie. But he had belonged to the anti-Proudie faction. He had been brought into the diocese by the Grantly interest; and therefore, during Mrs. Proudie's life-time, he had always been accounted among the enemies. There had never been any real intimacy between the houses. Each house had been always asked to dine with the other house once a year; but it had been understood that such dinings were ecclesiastico-official, and not friendly. There had been the same outside diocesan civility between even the palace and Plumstead. But now, when the great chieftain of the palace was no more, and the strength of the palace faction was gone, peace, or perhaps something more than peace,—amity, perhaps, might be more easily arranged with the dean than with the archdeacon. In preparation for such arrangements the bishop had gone to Mr. Harding's funeral.

And now the dean went to the palace at the bishop's behest. He found his lordship alone, and was received with almost reverential courtesy. He thought that the bishop was looking wonderfully aged since he last saw him, but did not perhaps take into account the absence of clerical sleekness which was incidental to the bishop's private life in his private room, and perhaps in a certain measure to his recent great affliction. The dean had been in the habit of regarding Dr. Proudie as a man almost young for his age,—having been in the habit of seeing him at his best, clothed in authority, redolent of the throne, conspicuous as regarded his apron and outward signs of episcopality. Much of all this was now absent. The bishop, as he rose to greet the dean, shuffled with his old slippers, and his hair was not brushed so becomingly as used to be the case when Mrs. Proudie was always near him.

It was necessary that a word should be said by each as to the loss which the other had suffered. "Mr. Dean," said his lordship, "allow me to offer you my condolements in regard to the death of that very excellent clergyman and most worthy gentleman, your father-in-law."

"Thank you, my lord. He was excellent and worthy. I do not suppose that I shall live to see any man who was more so. You also have a great,—a terrible loss."

"O, Mr. Dean, yes; yes, indeed, Mr. Dean. That was a loss."

"And hardly past the prime of life!"

"Ah, yes;—just fifty-six,—and so strong! Was she not? At least everybody thought so. And yet she was gone in a minute;—gone in a minute. I haven't held up my head since, Mr. Dean."

"It was a great loss, my lord; but you must struggle to bear it."

"I do struggle. I am struggling. But it makes one feel so lonely in this great house. Ah, me! I often wish, Mr. Dean, that it had pleased Providence to have left me in some humble parsonage, where duty would have been easier than it is here. But I will not trouble you with all that. What are we to do, Mr. Dean, about this poor Mr. Crawley?"

"Mr. Crawley is a very old friend of mine, and a very dear friend."

"Is he? Ah! A very worthy man, I am sure, and one who has been much tried by undeserved adversities."

"Most severely tried, my lord."

"Sitting among the potsherds, like Job; has he not, Mr. Dean? Well; let us hope that all that is over. When this accusation about the robbery was brought against him, I found myself bound to interfere."

"He has no complaint to make on that score."

"I hope not. I have not wished to be harsh, but what could I do, Mr. Dean? They told me that the civil authorities found the evidence so strong against him that it could not be withstood."

"It was very strong."

"And we thought that he should at least be relieved, and we sent for Dr. Tempest, who is his rural dean." Then the bishop, remembering all the circumstances of that interview with Dr. Tempest,—as to which he had ever felt assured that one of the results of it was the death of his wife, whereby there was no longer any "we" left in the palace of Barchester,—sighed piteously, looking up at the dean with hopeless face.

"Nobody doubts, my lord, that you acted for the best."

"I hope we did. I think we did. And now what shall we do? He has resigned his living, both to you and to me, as I hear,—you being the patron. It will simply be necessary, I think, that he should

ask to have the letters cancelled. Then, as I take it, there need be no reinstitution. You cannot think, Mr. Dean, how much I have thought about it all."

Then the dean unfolded his budget, and explained to the bishop how he hoped that the living of St. Ewolds, which was, after some ecclesiastical fashion, attached to the rectory of Plumstead, and which was now vacant by the demise of Mr. Harding, might be conferred by the archdeacon upon Mr. Crawley. It was necessary to explain also that this could not be done quite immediately, and in doing this the dean encountered some little difficulty. The archdeacon, he said, wished to be allowed another week to think about it; and therefore perhaps provision for the duties at Hogglestock might yet be made for a few Sundays. The bishop, the dean said, might easily understand that, after what had occurred, Mr. Crawley would hardly wish to go again into that pulpit, unless he did so as resuming duties which would necessarily be permanent with him. To all this the bishop assented, but he was apparently struck with much wonder at the choice made by the archdeacon. "I should have thought, Mr. Dean," he said, "that Mr. Crawley was the last man to have suited the archdeacon's choice."

"The archdeacon and I married sisters, my lord."

"Oh, ah! yes. And he puts the nomination of St. Ewolds at your disposition. I am sure I shall be delighted to institute so worthy a gentleman as Mr. Crawley." Then the dean took his leave of the bishop,—as will we also. Poor dear bishop! I am inclined to think that he was right in his regrets as to the little parsonage. Not that his failure at Barchester, and his present consciousness of lonely incompetence, were mainly due to any positive inefficiency on his own part. He might have been a sufficiently good bishop, had it not been that Mrs. Proudie was so much more than a sufficiently good bishop's wife. We will now say farewell to him, with a hope that the lopped tree may yet become green again, and to some extent fruitful, although all its beautiful head and richness of waving foliage have been taken from it.

About a week after this Henry Grantly rode over from Cosby Lodge to Hogglestock. It has been just said that though the assizes had passed by and though all question of Mr. Crawley's guilt was now set aside, no visitor had of late made his way over to Hogglestock. I fancy that Grace Crawley forgot, in the fulness of her memory as to other things, that Mr. Harding, of whose death she heard, had been her lover's grandfather,—and that therefore there might possibly be some delay. Had there been much said between the mother and the daughter about the lover, no doubt all this would have been explained; but

Grace was very reticent, and there were other matters in the Hogglestock household which in those days occupied Mrs. Crawley's mind. How were they again to begin life? for, in very truth, life as it had existed with them before, had been brought to an end. But Grace remembered well the sort of compact which existed between her and her lover;—the compact which had been made in very words between herself and her lover's father. Complete in her estimation as had been the heaven opened to her by Henry Grantly's offer, she had refused it all,—lest she should bring disgrace upon him. But the disgrace was not certain; and if her father should be made free from it, then,—then,—then Henry Grantly ought to come to her and be at her feet with all the expedition possible to him. That was her reading of the compact. She had once declared, when speaking of the possible disgrace which might attach itself to her family and to her name, that her poverty did not "signify a bit." She was not ashamed of her father,—only of the accusation against her father. Therefore she had hurried home when that accusation was withdrawn, desirous that her lover should tell her of his love,—if he chose to repeat such telling,—amidst all the poor things of Hogglestock, and not among the chairs and tables and good dinners of luxurious Framley. Mrs. Robarts had given a true interpretation to Lady Lufton of the haste which Grace had displayed. But she need not have been in so great a hurry. She had been at home already above a fortnight, and as yet he had made no sign. At last she said a word to her mother. "Might I not ask to go back to Miss Prettyman's now, mamma?" "I think, dear, you had better wait till things are a little settled. Papa is to hear again from the dean very soon. You see they are all in a great sorrow at Barchester about poor Mr. Harding's death." "Grace!" said Jane, rushing into the house almost speechless, at that moment, "here he is!—on horseback." I do not know why Jane should have talked about Major Grantly as simply "he." There had been no conversation among the sisters to justify her in such a mode of speech. Grace had not a moment to put two and two together, so that she might realize the meaning of what her mother had said; but nevertheless, she felt at the moment that the man, coming as he had done now, had come with all commendable speed. How foolish had she been with her wretched impatience!

There he was certainly, tying his horse up to the railing. "Mamma, what am I to say to him?"

"Nay, dear; he is your own friend,—of your own making. You must say what you think fit."

"You are not going?"

"I think we had better, dear." Then she went, and Jane with her, and Jane opened the door for Major Grantly. Mr. Crawley himself was away, at Hoggle End, and did not return till after Major Grantly had left the parsonage. Jane, as she greeted the grand gentleman, whom she had seen and no more than seen, hardly knew what to say to him. When, after a minute's hesitation, she told him that Grace was in there, —pointing to the sitting-room door, she felt that she had been very awkward. Henry Grantly, however, did not, I think, feel her awkwardness, being conscious of some small difficulties of his own. When, however, he found that Grace was alone, the task before him at once lost half its difficulties. "Grace," he said, "am I right to come to you now?"

"I do not know," she said. "I cannot tell."

"Dearest Grace, there is no reason on earth now why you should not be my wife."

"Is there not?"

"I know of none,—if you can love me. You saw my father?"

"Yes, I saw him."

"And you heard what he said?"

"I hardly remember what he said;—but he kissed me, and I thought he was very kind."

What little attempt Henry Grantly then made, thinking that he could not do better than follow closely the example of so excellent a father, need not be explained with minuteness. But I think that his first effort was not successful. Grace was embarrassed and retreated, and it was not till she had been compelled to give a direct answer to a direct question that she submitted to allow his arm round her waist. But when she had answered that question she was almost more humble than becomes a maiden who has just been wooed and won. A maiden who has been wooed and won, generally thinks that it is she who has conquered, and chooses to be triumphant accordingly. But Grace was even mean enough to thank her lover. "I do not know why you should be so good to me," she said.

"Because I love you," said he, "better than all the world."

"But why should you be so good to me as that? Why should you love me? I am such a poor thing for a man like you to love."

"I have had the wit to see that you are not a poor thing, Grace; and it is thus that I have earned my treasure. Some girls are poor things, and some are rich treasures."

"If love can make me a treasure, I will be your treasure. And if love can make me rich, I will be rich for you." After that I think he had no difficulty in following in his father's footsteps.

After a while Mrs. Crawley came in, and there was much pleasant talking among them, while Henry Grantly sat happily with his love, as though waiting for Mr. Crawley's return. But though he was there nearly all the morning Mr. Crawley did not return. "I think he likes the brickmakers better than anybody in all the world, except ourselves," said Grace. "I don't know how he will manage to get on without his friends." Before Grace had said this, Major Grantly had told all his story, and had produced a letter from his father, addressed to Mr. Crawley, of which the reader shall have a copy, although at this time the letter had not been opened. The letter was as follows:—

"My dear Sir, "Plumstead Rectory, — May, 186—.

"You will no doubt have heard that Mr. Harding, the vicar of St. Ewolds, who was the father of my wife and of Mrs. Arabin, has been taken from us. The loss to us of so excellent and so dear a man has been very great. I have conferred with my friend the Dean of Barchester as to a new nomination, and I venture to request your acceptance of the preferment, if it should suit you to move from Hogglestock to St. Ewolds. It may be as well that I should state plainly my reasons for making this offer to a gentleman with whom I am not personally acquainted. Mr. Harding, on his deathbed, himself suggested it, moved thereto by what he had heard of the cruel and undeserved persecution to which you have lately been subjected; as also,—on which point he was very urgent in what he said,—by the character which you bear in the diocese for zeal and piety. I may also add, that the close connection which, as I understand, is likely to take place between your family and mine has been an additional reason for my taking this step, and the long friendship which has existed between you and my wife's brother-in-law, the Dean of Barchester, is a third.

"St. Ewolds is worth 350*l.* per annum, besides the house, which is sufficiently commodious for a moderate family. The population is about twelve hundred, of which more than a half consists of persons dwelling in an outskirt of the city,—for the parish runs almost into Barchester.

"I shall be glad to have your reply with as little delay as may suit your convenience, and in the event of your accepting the offer,—which I sincerely trust you may be enabled to do,—I shall hope to have an early opportunity of seeing you, with reference to your institution to the parish.

"Allow me also to say to you and to Mrs. Crawley that, if we have been correctly informed as to that other event to which I have alluded, we both hope that we may have an early opportunity of making our-

selves personally acquainted with the parents of a young lady who is to be so dear to us. As I have met your daughter, I may perhaps be allowed to send her my kindest love. If, as my daughter-in-law, she comes up to the impression which she gave me at our first meeting, I, at any rate, shall be satisfied.

"I have the honour to be, my dear sir,
"Your most faithful servant,
"THEOPHILUS GRANTLY."

This letter the archdeacon had shown to his wife, by whom it had not been very warmly approved. Nothing, Mrs. Grantly had said, could be prettier than what the archdeacon had said about Grace. Mrs. Crawley, no doubt, would be satisfied with that. But Mr. Crawley was such a strange man! "He will be stranger than I take him to be if he does not accept St. Ewolds," said the archdeacon. "But in offering it," said Mrs. Grantly "you have not said a word of your own high opinion of his merits." "I have not a very high opinion of them," said the archdeacon. "Your father had, and I have said so. And as I have the most profound respect for your father's opinion in such a matter, I have permitted that to overcome my own hesitation." This was pretty from the husband to the wife as it regarded her father, who had now gone from them; and, therefore, Mrs. Grantly accepted it without further argument. The reader may probably feel assured that the archdeacon had never, during their joint lives, acted in any church matter upon the advice given to him by Mr. Harding; and it was probably the case also that the living would have been offered to Mr. Crawley, if nothing had been said by Mr. Harding on the subject; but it did not become Mrs. Grantly even to think of all this. The archdeacon, having made his gracious speech about her father, was not again asked to alter his letter. "I suppose he will accept it," said Mrs. Grantly. "I should think that he probably may," said the archdeacon.

So Grace, knowing what was the purport of the letter, sat with it between her fingers, while her lover sat beside her, full of various plans for the future. This was his first lover's present to her;—and what a present it was! Comfort, and happiness, and a pleasant home for all her family. "St. Ewolds isn't the best house in the world," said the major, "because it is old, and what I call piecemeal; but it is very pretty, and certainly nice." "That is just the sort of parsonage that I dream about," said Jane. "And the garden is pleasant with old trees," said the major. "I always dream about old trees," said Jane,

"only I'm afraid I'm too old myself to be let to climb up them now." Mrs. Crawley said very little, but sat by with her eyes full of tears. Was it possible that, at last, before the world had closed upon her, she was to enjoy something again of the comforts which she had known in her early years, and to be again surrounded by those decencies of life which of late had been almost banished from her home by poverty!

Their various plans for the future,—for the immediate future,—were very startling. Grace was to go over at once to Plumstead, whither Edith had been already transferred from Cosby Lodge. That was all very well; there was nothing very startling or impracticable in that. The Framley ladies, having none of those doubts as to what was coming which had for a while perplexed Grace herself, had taken little liberties with her wardrobe, which enabled such a visit to be made without overwhelming difficulties. But the major was equally eager,—or at any rate equally imperious,—in his requisition for a visit from Mr. and Mrs. Crawley themselves to Plumstead rectory. Mrs. Crawley did not dare to put forward the plain unadorned reasons against it, as Mr. Crawley had done when discussing the subject of a visit to the deanery. Nor could she quite venture to explain that she feared that the archdeacon and her husband would hardly mix well together in society. With whom, indeed, was it possible that her husband should mix well, after his long and hardly-tried seclusion? She could only plead that both her husband and herself were so little used to going out that she feared,—she feared,—she feared she knew not what. "We'll get over all that," said the major, almost contemptuously. "It is only the first plunge that is disagreeable." Perhaps the major did not know how very disagreeable a first plunge may be!

At two o'clock Henry Grantly got up to go. "I should very much like to have seen him, but I fear I cannot wait longer. As it is, the patience of my horse has been surprising." Then Grace walked out with him to the gate, and put her hand upon his bridle as he mounted, and thought how wonderful was the power of Fortune, that the goddess should have sent so gallant a gentleman to be her lord and her lover. "I declare I don't quite believe it even yet," she said, in the letter which she wrote to Lily Dale that night.

It was four before Mr. Crawley returned to his house, and then he was very weary. There were many sick in these days at Hoggle End, and he had gone from cottage to cottage through the day. Giles Hoggett was almost unable to work from rheumatism, but still was of opinion that doggedness might carry him on. "It's been a deal o' service to you, Muster Crawley," he said. "We hears about it all.

If you hadn't a been dogged, where'd you a been now?" With Giles Hoggett and others he had remained all the day, and now he came home weary and beaten. "You'll tell him first," Grace had said, "and then I'll give him the letter." The wife was the first to tell him of the good fortune that was coming.

He flung himself into the old chair as soon as he entered, and asked for some bread and tea. "Jane has already gone for it, dear," said his wife. "We have had a visitor here, Josiah."

"A visitor,—what visitor?"

"Grace's own friend,—Henry Grantly."

"Grace, come here, that I may kiss you and bless you," he said, very solemnly. "It would seem that the world is going to be very good to you."

"Papa, you must read this letter first."

"Before I kiss my own darling?" Then she knelt at his feet. "I see," he said, taking the letter; "it is from your lover's father. Peradventure he signifies his consent, which would be surely needful before such a marriage would be seemly."

"It isn't about me, papa, at all."

"Not about you? If so, that would be most unpromising. But, in any case, you are my best darling." Then he kissed her and blessed her, and slowly opened the letter. His wife had now come close to him, and was standing over him, touching him, so that she also could read the archdeacon's letter. Grace, who was still in front of him, could see the working of his face as he read it; but even she could not tell whether he was gratified, or offended, or dismayed. When he had got as far as the first offer of the presentation, he ceased reading for a while, and looked round about the room as though lost in thought. "Let me see what further he writes to me," he then said; and after that he continued the letter slowly to the end. "Nay, my child, you were in error in saying that he wrote not about you. 'Tis in writing of you he has put some real heart into his words. He writes as though his home would be welcome to you."

"And does he not make St. Ewolds welcome to you, papa?"

"He makes me welcome to accept it,—if I may use the word after the ordinary and somewhat faulty parlance of mankind."

"And you will accept it,—of course?"

"I know not that, my dear. The acceptance of a cure of souls is a thing not to be decided on in a moment,—as is the colour of a garment or the shape of a toy. Nor would I condescend to take this thing from the archdeacon's hands, if I thought that he bestowed it

simply that the father of his daughter-in-law might no longer be accounted poor."

"Does he say that, papa?"

"He gives it as a collateral reason, basing his offer first on the kindly expressed judgment of one who is now no more. Then he refers to the friendship of the dean. If he believed that the judgment of his late father-in-law in so weighty a matter were the best to be relied upon of all that were at his command, then he would have done well to trust to it. But in such case he should have bolstered up a good ground for action with no collateral supports which are weak,—and worse than weak. However, it shall have my best consideration, whereunto I hope that wisdom will be given me where only such wisdom can be had."

"Josiah," said his wife to him, when they were alone, "you will not refuse it?"

"Not willingly,—not if it may be accepted. Alas! you need not urge me, when the temptation is so strong!"

CHAPTER LXXXIII.

MR. CRAWLEY IS CONQUERED.

It was more than a week before the archdeacon received a reply from Mr. Crawley, during which time the dean had been over at Hogglestock more than once, as had also Mrs. Arabin and Lady Lufton the younger, —and there had been letters written without end, and the archdeacon had been nearly beside himself. "A man who pretends to conscientious scruples of that kind is not fit to have a parish," he had said to his wife. His wife understood what he meant, and I trust that the reader may also understand it. In the ordinary cutting of blocks a very fine razor is not an appropriate instrument. The archdeacon, moreover, loved the temporalities of the Church as temporalities. The Church was beautiful to him because one man by interest might have a thousand a year, while another man equally good, but without interest, could only have a hundred. And he liked the men who had the interest a great deal better than the men who had it not. He had been willing to admit this poor perpetual curate, who had so long been kept out in the cold, within the pleasant circle which was warm with ecclesiastical good things, and the man hesitated,—because of scruples, as the dean told him! "I always button up my pocket when I hear of scruples," the archdeacon said.

But at last Mr. Crawley condescended to accept St. Ewolds. "Reverend and dear Sir," he said in his letter. "For the personal benevolence of the offer made to me in your letter of the — instant, I beg to tender you my most grateful thanks; as also for your generous kindness to me, in telling me of the high praise bestowed upon me by a gentleman who is now no more,—whose character I have esteemed and whose good opinion I value. There is, methinks, something inexpressibly dear to me in the recorded praise of the dead. For the further instance of the friendship of the Dean of Barchester, I am also thankful.

"Since the receipt of your letter I have doubted much as to my fitness for the work you have proposed to entrust to me,—not from any feeling that the parish of St. Ewolds may be beyond my intellectual power, but because the latter circumstances of my life have been of a nature so strange and perplexing, that they have left me somewhat in

doubt as to my own aptitude for going about among men without giving offence and becoming a stumbling-block.

"Nevertheless, reverend and dear sir, if after this confession on my part of a certain faulty demeanour with which I know well that I am afflicted, you are still willing to put the parish into my hands, I will accept the charge,—instigated to do so by the advice of all whom I have consulted on the subject; and in thus accepting it, I hereby pledge myself to vacate it at a month's warning, should I be called upon by you to do so at any period within the next two years. Should I be so far successful during those twenty-four months as to have satisfied both yourself and myself, I may then perhaps venture to regard the preferment as my own in perpetuity for life.

"I have the honour to be, reverend and dear sir,

"Your most humble and faithful servant,

"Josiah Crawley."

"Psha!" said the archdeacon, who professed that he did not at all like the letter. "I wonder what he would say if I sent him a month's notice at next Michaelmas?"

"I'm sure he would go," said Mrs. Grantly.

"The more fool he," said the archdeacon.

At this time Grace was at the parsonage in a seventh heaven of happiness. The archdeacon was never rough to her, nor did he make any of his harsh remarks about her father in her presence. Before her St. Ewolds was spoken of as the home that was to belong to the Crawleys for the next twenty years. Mrs. Grantly was very loving with her, lavishing upon her pretty presents, and words that were prettier than the presents. Grace's life had hitherto been so destitute of those prettinesses and softnesses, which can hardly be had without money though money alone will not purchase them, that it seemed to her now that the heavens rained graciousness upon her. It was not that the archdeacon's watch, or her lover's chain, or Mrs. Grantly's locket, or the little toy from Italy which Mrs. Arabin brought to her from the treasures of the deanery, filled her heart with undue exultation. It was not that she revelled in her new delights of silver and gold and shining gems: but that the silver and gold and shining gems were constant indications to her that things had changed, not only for her, but for her father and mother, and brother and sister. She felt now more sure than ever that she could not have enjoyed her love had she accepted her lover while the disgrace of the accusation against her father remained. But now,—having waited till that had passed away, everything was a new happiness to her.

At last it was settled that Mr. and Mrs. Crawley were to come to Plumstead,—and they came. It would be too long to tell now how gradually had come about that changed state of things which made such a visit possible. Mr. Crawley had at first declared that such a thing was quite out of the question. If St. Ewolds was to depend upon it St. Ewolds must be given up. And I think that it would have been impossible for him to go direct from Hogglestock to Plumstead. But it fell out after this wise.

Mr. Harding's curate at St. Ewolds was nominated to Hogglestock, and the dean urged upon his friend Crawley the expediency of giving up the house as quickly as he could do so. Gradually at this time Mr. Crawley had been forced into a certain amount of intimacy with the haunts of men. He had been twice or thrice at Barchester, and had lunched with the dean. He had been at Framley for an hour or two, and had been forced into some communication with old Mr. Thorne, the squire of his new parish. The end of this had been that he had at last consented to transfer himself and wife and daughter to the deanery for a fortnight. He had preached one farewell sermon at Hogglestock,—not, as he told his audience, as their pastor, which he had ceased to be now for some two or three months,—but as their old and loving friend, to whom the use of his former pulpit had been lent, that he might express himself thus among them for the last time. His sermon was very short, and was preached without book or notes,—but he never once paused for a word or halted in the string or rhythm of his discourse. The dean was there and declared to him afterwards that he had not given him credit for such powers of utterance. "Any man can utter out of a full heart," Crawley had answered. "In this trumpery affair about myself, my heart is full! If we could only have our hearts full in other matters, our utterances thereanent would receive more attention." To all of which the dean made no reply.

On the day after this the Crawleys took their final departure from Hogglestock, all the brickmakers from Hoggle End having assembled on the occasion, with a purse containing seventeen pounds seven shillings and sixpence, which they insisted on presenting to Mr. Crawley, and as to which there was a little difficulty. And at the deanery they remained for a fortnight. How Mrs. Crawley, under the guidance of Mrs. Arabin, had there so far trenched upon the revenues of St. Ewolds as to provide for her husband and herself raiment fitting for the worldly splendour of Plumstead, need not here be told in detail. Suffice to say, the raiment was forthcoming, and Mr. Crawley found himself to be the perplexed possessor of a black dress coat, in addition to the

long frock, coming nearly to his feet, which was provided for his daily wear. Touching this garment, there had been some discussion between the dean and the new vicar. The dean had desired that it should be curtailed in length. The vicar had remonstrated,—but still with something of the weakness of compliance in his eye. Then the dean had persisted. "Surely the price of the cloth wanted to perfect the comeliness of the garment cannot be much," said the vicar, almost woefully. After that, the dean relented, and the comeliness of the coat was made perfect. The new black long frock, I think Mr. Crawley liked; but the dress coat, with the suit complete, perplexed him sorely.

With his new coats, and something, also, of new manners, he and his wife went over to Plumstead, leaving Jane at the deanery with Mrs. Arabin. The dean also went to Plumstead. They arrived there not much before dinner, and as Grace was there before them the first moments were not so bad. Before Mr. Crawley had had time to feel himself lost in the drawing-room, he was summoned away to prepare himself for dinner,—for dinner, and for the coat, which at the deanery he had been allowed to leave unworn. "I would with all my heart that I might retire to rest," he said to his wife, when the ceremony had been perfected.

"Do not say so. Go down and take your place with them, and speak your mind with them,—as you so well know how. Who among them can do it so well?"

"I have been told," said Mr. Crawley, "that you shall take a cock which is lord of the farmyard,—the cock of all that walk,—and when you have daubed his feathers with mud, he shall be thrashed by every dunghill coward. I say not that I was ever the cock of the walk, but I know that they have daubed my feathers." Then he went down among the other poultry into the farmyard.

At dinner he was very silent, answering, however, with a sort of graceful stateliness any word that Mrs. Grantly addressed to him. Mr. Thorne, from Ullathorne, was there also to meet his new vicar, as was also Mr. Thorne's very old sister, Miss Monica Thorne. And Lady Anne Grantly was there,—she having come with the expressed intention that the wives of the two brothers should know each other,—but with a warmer desire, I think, of seeing Mr. Crawley, of whom the clerical world had been talking much since some notice of the accusation against him had become general. There were, therefore, ten or twelve at the dinner-table, and Mr. Crawley had not made one at such a board certainly since his marriage. All went fairly smooth with him till the ladies left the room; for though Lady Anne, who sat at his left hand,

had perplexed him somewhat with clerical questions, he had found that he was not called upon for much more than monosyllabic responses. But in his heart he feared the archdeacon, and he felt that when the ladies were gone the archdeacon would not leave him alone in his silence.

As soon as the door was closed, the first subject mooted was that of the Plumstead fox, which had been so basely murdered on Mr. Thorne's ground. Mr. Thorne had confessed the iniquity, had dismissed the murderous keeper, and all was serene. But the greater on that account was the feasibility of discussing the question, and the archdeacon had a good deal to say about it. Then Mr. Thorne turned to the new vicar, and asked him whether foxes abounded in Hogglestock. Had he been asked as to the rats or the moles, he would have known more about it.

"Indeed, sir, I know not whether or no there be any foxes in the parish of Hogglestock. I do not remember me that I ever saw one. It is an animal whose habits I have not watched."

"There is an earth at Hoggle Bushes," said the major; "and I never knew it without a litter."

"I think I know the domestic whereabouts of every fox in Plumstead," said the archdeacon, with an ill-natured intention of astonishing Mr. Crawley.

"Of foxes with two legs our friend is speaking, without doubt," said the vicar of St. Ewolds, with an attempt at grim pleasantry.

"Of them we have none at Plumstead. No,—I was speaking of the dear old fellow with the brush. Pass the bottle, Mr. Crawley. Won't you fill your glass?" Mr. Crawley passed the bottle, but would not fill his glass. Then the dean, looking up slily, saw the vexation written in the archdeacon's face. The parson whom the archdeacon feared most of all parsons was the parson who wouldn't fill his glass.

Then the subject was changed. "I'm told that the bishop has at last made his reappearance on his throne," said the archdeacon.

"He was in the cathedral last Sunday," said the dean.

"Does he ever mean to preach again?"

"He never did preach very often," said the dean.

"A great deal too often, from all that people say," said the archdeacon. "I never heard him myself, and never shall, I dare say. You have heard him, Mr. Crawley?"

"I have never had that good fortune, Mr. Archdeacon. But living as I shall now do, so near to the city, I may perhaps be enabled to attend the cathedral service on some holyday of the Church, which may

not require prayers in my own rural parish. I think that the clergy of the diocese should be acquainted with the opinions, and with the voice, and with the very manner and words of their bishop. As things are now done, this is not possible. I could wish that there were occasions on which a bishop might assemble his clergy, and preach to them sermons adapted to their use."

"What do you call a bishop's charge, then?"

"It is usually in the printed form that I have received it," said Mr. Crawley.

"I think we have quite enough of that kind of thing," said the archdeacon.

"He is a man whose conversation is not pleasing to me," Mr. Crawley said to his wife that night.

"Do not judge of him too quickly, Josiah," his wife said. "There is so much of good in him! He is kind, and generous, and I think affectionate."

"But he is of the earth, earthy. When you and the other ladies had retired, the conversation at first fell on the habits and value of—foxes. I have been informed that in these parts the fox is greatly prized, as without a fox to run before the dogs, that scampering over the country which is called hunting, and which delights by the quickness and perhaps by the peril of the exercise, is not relished by the riders. Of the wisdom or taste herein displayed by the hunters of the day I say nothing. But it seemed to me that in talking of foxes Dr. Grantly was master of his subject. Thence the topic glided to the duties of a bishop and to questions of preaching, as to which Dr. Grantly was not slow in offering his opinion. But I thought that I would rather have heard him talk about the foxes for a week together." She said nothing more to him, knowing well how useless it was to attempt to turn him by any argument. To her thinking the kindness of the archdeacon to them personally demanded some indulgence in the expression, and even in the formation, of an opinion, respecting his clerical peculiarities.

On the next day, however, Mr. Crawley, having been summoned by the archdeacon into the library for a little private conversation, found that he got on better with him. How the archdeacon conquered him may perhaps be best described by a further narration of what Mr. Crawley said to his wife. "I told him that in regard to money matters, as he called them, I had nothing to say. I only trusted that his son was aware that my daughter had no money, and never would have any. 'My dear Crawley,' the archdeacon said,—for of late there seems to

have grown up in the world a habit of greater familiarity than that which I think did prevail when last I moved much among men ;—'my dear Crawley, I have enough for both.' 'I would we stood on more equal grounds,' I said. Then as he answered me, he rose from his chair. 'We stand,' said he, 'on the only perfect level on which such men can meet each other. We are both gentlemen.' 'Sir,' I said, rising also, 'from the bottom of my heart I agree with you. I could not have spoken such words ; but coming from you who are rich to me who am poor, they are honourable to the one and comfortable to the other.' "

"And after that ? "

"He took down from the shelves a volume of sermons which his father published many years ago, and presented it to me. I have it now under my arm. It hath the old bishop's manuscript notes, which I will study carefully." And thus the archdeacon had hit his bird on both wings.

CHAPTER LXXXIV.

CONCLUSION.

It now only remains for me to gather together a few loose strings, and tie them together in a knot, so that my work may not become untwisted. Early in July, Henry Grantly and Grace Crawley were married in the parish church of Plumstead,—a great impropriety, as to which neither Archdeacon Grantly nor Mr. Crawley could be got to assent for a long time, but which was at last carried, not simply by a union of Mrs. Grantly and Mrs. Crawley, nor even by the assistance of Mrs. Arabin, but by the strong intervention of old Lady Lufton herself. "Of course Miss Crawley ought to be married from St. Ewolds vicarage; but when the furniture has only half been got in, how is it possible?" When Lady Lufton thus spoke, the archdeacon gave way, and Mr. Crawley hadn't a leg to stand upon. Henry Grantly had not an opinion upon the matter. He told his father that he expected that they would marry him among them, and that that would be enough for him. As for Grace, nobody even thought of asking her; and I doubt whether she would have heard anything about the contest, had not some tidings of it reached her from her lover. Married they were at Plumstead,—and the breakfast was given with all that luxuriance of plenty which was so dear to the archdeacon's mind. Mr. Crawley was the officiating priest. With his hands dropping before him, folded humbly, he told the archdeacon,—when that Plumstead question had been finally settled in opposition to his wishes,—that he would fain himself perform the ceremony by which his dearest daughter would be bound to her marriage duties. "And who else should?" said the archdeacon. Mr. Crawley muttered that he had not known how far his reverend brother might have been willing to waive his rights. But the archdeacon, who was in high good humour,—having just bestowed a little pony carriage on his new daughter-in-law,—only laughed at him; and, if the rumour which was handed about the families be true, the archdeacon, before the interview was over, had poked Mr. Crawley in the ribs. Mr. Crawley married them; but the archdeacon assisted,—and the dean gave away the bride. The Rev. Charles Grantly was there also; and as there was, as a matter of course, a cloud of curates floating in the distance, Henry Grantly was perhaps to be excused for

declaring to his wife, when the pair had escaped, that surely no couple had ever been so tightly buckled since marriage had first become a Church ceremony.

Soon after that, Mr. and Mrs. Crawley became quiet at St. Ewolds, and, as I think, contented. Her happiness began very quickly. Though she had been greatly broken by her troubles, the first sight she had of her husband in his new long frock-coat went far to restore her, and while he was declaring himself to be a cock so daubed with mud as to be incapable of crowing, she was congratulating herself on seeing her husband once more clothed as became his position. And they were lucky, too, as regarded the squire's house; for Mr. Thorne was old, and quiet, and old-fashioned; and Miss Thorne was older, and though she was not exactly quiet, she was very old-fashioned indeed. So that there grew to be a pleasant friendship between Miss Thorne and Mrs. Crawley.

Johnny Eames, when last I heard of him, was still a bachelor, and, as I think, likely to remain so. At last he had utterly thrown over Sir Raffle Buffle, declaring to his friends that the special duties of private secretaryship were not exactly to his taste. "You get so sick at the thirteenth private note," he said, "that you find yourself unable to carry on the humbug any farther." But he did not leave his office. "I'm the head of a room, you know," he told Lady Julia De Guest; "and there's nothing to trouble me,—and a fellow, you know, ought to have something to do." Lady Julia told him, with a great deal of energy, that she would never forgive him if he gave up his office. After that eventful night when he escaped ignominiously from the house of Lady Demolines under the protection of the policeman's lantern, he did hear more than once from Porchester Terrace, and from allies employed by the enemy who was there resident. "My cousin, the serjeant," proved to be a myth. Johnny found out all about that Serjeant Runter, who was distantly connected, indeed, with the late husband of Lady Demolines, but had always persistently declined to have any intercourse whatever with her ladyship. For the serjeant was a rising man, and Lady Demolines was not exactly progressing in the world. Johnny heard nothing from the serjeant; but from Madalina he got letter after letter. In the first she asked him not to think too much of the little joke that had occurred. In her second she described the vehemence of her love. In her third the bitterness of her wrath. Her fourth she simply invited him to come and dine in Porchester Terrace. Her fifth was the outpouring of injured innocence. And then came letters from an attorney. Johnny answered not a word to any of them,

and gradually the letters were discontinued. Within six months of the receipt of the last, he was delighted by reading among the marriages in the newspapers a notice that Peter Bangles, Esq., of the firm of Burton and Bangles, wine merchants, of Hook Court, had been united to Madalina, daughter of the late Sir Confucius Demolines, at the church of Peter the Martyr. "Most appropriate," said Johnny, as he read the notice to Conway Dalrymple, who was then back from his wedding tour; "for most assuredly there will be now another Peter the Martyr."

"I'm not so sure of that," said Conway, who had heard something of Mr. Peter Bangles. "There are men who have strong wills of their own, and strong hands of their own."

"Poor Madalina!" said Johnny. "If he does beat her, I hope he will do it tenderly. It may be that a little of it will suit her fevered temperament."

Before the summer was over Conway Dalrymple had been married to Clara Van Siever, and by a singular arrangement of circumstances had married her with the full approval of old Mrs. Van. Mr. Musselboro, —whose name I hope has not been altogether forgotten, though the part played by him has been subordinate,—had opposed Dalrymple in the efforts made by the artist to get something out of Broughton's estate for the benefit of the widow. From circumstances of which Dalrymple learned the particulars with the aid of an attorney, it seemed to him that certain facts were wilfully kept in the dark by Musselboro, and he went with his complaint to Mrs. Van Siever, declaring that he would bring the whole affair into court, unless all the workings of the firm were made clear to him. Mrs. Van was very insolent to him,—and even turned him out of the house. But, nevertheless, she did not allow Mr. Musselboro to escape. Whoever was to be left in the dark she did not wish to be there herself;—and it began to dawn upon her that her dear Musselboro was deceiving her. Then she sent for Dalrymple, and without a word of apology for her former conduct, put him upon the right track. As he was pushing his inquiries, and working heaven and earth for the unfortunate widow,—as to whom he swore daily that when this matter was settled he would never see her again, so terrible was she to him with her mock affection and pretended hysterics, and false moralities,—he was told one day that she had gone off with Mr. Musselboro! Mr. Musselboro, finding that this was the surest plan of obtaining for himself the little business in Hook Court, married the widow of his late partner, and is at this moment probably carrying on a law-suit with Mrs. Van. For the law-suit Conway Dalrymple cared nothing. When the quarrel had become hot between

Mrs. Van and her late myrmidon, Clara fell into Conway's hands without opposition; and, let the law-suit go as it may, there will be enough left of Mrs. Van's money to make the house of Mr. and Mrs. Conway Dalrymple very comfortable. The picture of Jael and Sisera was stitched up without any difficulty, and I daresay most of my readers will remember it hanging on the walls of the exhibition.

Before I take my leave of the diocese of Barchester for ever, which I purpose to do in the succeeding paragraph, I desire to be allowed to say one word of apology for myself, in answer to those who have accused me,—always without bitterness, and generally with tenderness, —of having forgotten, in writing of clergymen, the first and most prominent characteristic of the ordinary English clergyman's life. I have described many clergymen, they say, but have spoken of them all as though their professional duties, their high calling, their daily workings for the good of those around them, were matters of no moment, either to me, or, in my opinion, to themselves. I would plead, in answer to this, that my object has been to paint the social and not the professional lives of clergymen; and that I have been led to do so, firstly, by a feeling that as no men affect more strongly, by their own character, the society of those around than do country clergymen, so, therefore, their social habits have been worth the labour necessary for painting them; and secondly, by a feeling that though I, as a novelist, may feel myself entitled to write of clergymen out of their pulpits, as I may also write of lawyers and doctors, I have no such liberty to write of them in their pulpits. When I have done so, if I have done so, I have so far transgressed. There are those who have told me that I have made all my clergymen bad, and none good. I must venture to hint to such judges that they have taught their eyes to love a colouring higher than nature justifies. We are, most of us, apt to love Raphael's madonnas better than Rembrandt's matrons. But, though we do so, we know that Rembrandt's matrons existed; but we have a strong belief that no such woman as Raphael painted ever did exist. In that he painted, as he may be surmised to have done, for pious purposes,—at least for Church purposes,—Raphael was justified; but had he painted so for family portraiture he would have been false. Had I written an epic about clergymen, I would have taken St. Paul for my model; but describing, as I have endeavoured to do, such clergymen as I see around me, I could not venture to be transcendental. For myself I can only say that I shall always be happy to sit, when allowed to do so, at the table of Archdeacon Grantly, to walk through the High Street of Barchester arm in arm with Mr. Robarts of Framley, and to stand alone

and shed a tear beneath the modest black stone in the north transept of the cathedral on which is inscribed the name of Septimus Harding.

And now, if the reader will allow me to seize him affectionately by the arm, we will together take our last farewell of Barset and of the towers of Barchester. I may not venture to say to him that, in this country, he and I together have wandered often through the country lanes, and have ridden together over the too-well wooded fields, or have stood together in the cathedral nave listening to the peals of the organ, or have together sat at good men's tables, or have confronted together the angry pride of men who were not good. I may not boast that any beside myself have so realized the place, and the people, and the facts, as to make such reminiscences possible as those which I should attempt to evoke by an appeal to perfect fellowship. But to me Barset has been a real county, and its city a real city, and the spires and towers have been before my eyes, and the voices of the people are known to my ears, and the pavement of the city ways are familiar to my footsteps. To them all I now say farewell. That I have been induced to wander among them too long by my love of old friendships, and by the sweetness of old faces, is a fault for which I may perhaps be more readily forgiven, when I repeat, with some solemnity of assurance, the promise made in my title, that this shall be the last chronicle of Barset.

THE END.

London: Printed by Smith, Elder and Co., Old Bailey, E.C.

THE

LAST CHRONICLE

OF

BARSET.

BY

ANTHONY TROLLOPE.

WITH THIRTY-TWO ILLUSTRATIONS BY GEORGE H. THOMAS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

SMITH, ELDER AND CO., 65, CORNHILL.

M.DCCC.LXVII.

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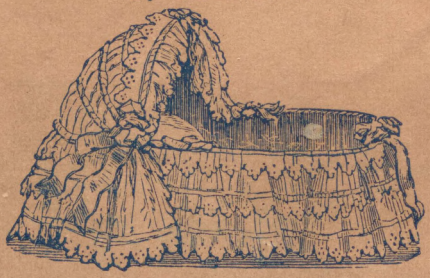

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London: Printed by SMITH, ELDER and Co., 15½, Old Bailey, E.C.